

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANA 02034 270748Z

12

ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 MC-02 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 OMB-01 DODE-00 AF-06 /055 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6040

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANA 2034

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MOPS, MASS, PFOR, ET, US

SUBJECT: TRANSFER OF E-5A/B AIRCRAFT

REF: ADDIS ABABA 8981

1. SEVERAL POINTS MIGHT BE RAISED AS BACKGROUND TO DEPARTMENT'S DECISION ON APPROACHING YARG, AS SUGGESTED REFTTEL, FOR PERMISSION TO RE FUEL F-5'S IN YEMEN RATHER THAN IN ASMARA, PRIOR TO THEIR DELIVERY IN DEBRE ZEIT.

2. FIRST, YARG OFFICIALS HAVE GROWN INCREASINGLY CONCERNED WITH PLIGHT OF YEMENI COMMUNITY IN ETHIOPIA. SUBJECT HAS BEEN RAISED WITH EMBASSY HERE BEFORE AND I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO COME INTO FONMIN LATER THIS WEEK FOR ANOTHER DISCUSSION. PROBLEM MAY HAVE NEW ACCENT IN SANA AS GROUP OF 65 DESTITUTE YEMENI REFUGEES HAVE ARRIVED THIS WEEK HERE FROM ETHIOPIA. YARG OFFICIALS MAY SEE APPROVAL OF REFUELING STOP AS OPPORTUNITY FOR RETALIATION OR LEVERAGE AGAINST ETHIOPIAN GOVT WHICH, THEY BELIEVE IS DOING NOTHING TO PROTECT YEMENIS IN ERITREAN CONFLICT AND MAY BE SINGLING THEM OUT UNFAIRLY(AS MUSLIMS AND POTENTIAL PDRY SYMPATHIZERS) FOR HARSH TREATMENT.

3. SECOND, JUST AS WE ARE CONCERNED WITH MAKING SURE THAT FIGHTERS WITH USAF MARKINGS AND PILOTS DO NOT RPT NOT APPEAR IN ANY WAY TO BE IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS AGAINST ERITREAN REBLES, YARG WILL BE CONCERNED THAT PDRY AND LEFTIST CRITICS IN YAR WILL SIEZE
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PAGE 02 SANA 02034 270748Z

CHANCE TO TAR ARABISM OF SANA REGIME.

4. ON OTHER HAND, OUR RELATIONS WITH YARG ARE CLOSE AND BROAD-RANGING AND, IN PRIVATE IF NOT IN PUBLIC, RULING CIRCLES HERE HAVE REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED CONCERN FOR LEFT-WING ORIENTATION OF ERITREANS, WHO ARE CHAMPIONED BY ARCH-RIVALS SOUTH YEMENIS. IT COULD BE MADE CLEAR TO YARG THAT, WITH ASMARA AVAILABLE TO AIRCRAFT, AND GOE PRESUMABLY NOT RPT NOT AT ALL ADVERSE TO USING ASMARA, THERE IS NO MILEAGE WITH ETHIOPIANS IN WITHHOLDING PERMISSION FOR REFUELING STOP IN YEMEN. THIS IS, INSTEAD, FAVOR TO USG FOR TRANSIT OF AIRCRAFT WITH USAF MARKINGS. THIS FACT SHOULD, IN ADDITION, OFFSET OR AVERT POTENTIAL CHARGES OF YARG COLLUSION WITH GOE AGAINST ERITREANS. AS NOTED REFTTEL, SAUDI COOPERATION WITH OVERFLIGHTS AND FUELING SHOULD BUTTRESS THIS POINT.

6. CANNOT COMMENT ON POSSIBLE TECHNICAL COMPLICATIONS OF REFUELING THESE AIRCRAFT IN SANA OR HODEIDA BUT IT WOULD BE HIGHLY IMPROVIDENT, IN YEMEN, TO UNDERESTIMATE THESE. KHAMYS MUSHAYT IN ASIR REGION OF SAUDI ARABIA MIGHT BE BETTER EQUIPPED AND STILL WITHIN F 5 A AND B RANGE OF DEBRE ZEIT.

7. ON BALANCE, IF DECISION MADE TO APPROACH YARG, I BELIEVE WE COULD EASILY DO SO IN CONFIDENCE WITHOUT ANY PROBLEMS. YARG DECISION, HOWEVER IS AT BEST A TOSS-UP AND CHANCE OF REFUSAL IS VERY REAL.
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